

JCOGS Bulletin

JEWISH COMMUNITY OF GREATER STOWE

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זכרונם לברכה

Jesse McIlherron Lamar Smith Emmett Till
 John Earl Reese Willie Edwards, Jr. Herbert Lee
 Medgar Evers Virgil Lamar Wares
 Jimmie Lee Jackson Martin Luther King, Jr.
 Phillip L. Gibbs James Earl Green Trayvon Martin
 Eric Garner John Crawford III Michael Brown
 Ezell Ford Dante Parker Michelle Cusseaux
 Tanisha Anderson Akai Gurley Tamir Rice
 Natasha McKenna Romain Brisbon
 Tony Robinson Walter Scott Bettie Jones
 Freddie Gray Alton Sterling Philando Castile
 Terence Crutcher Stephon Clark Botham Jean
 Atatiana Jefferson Eric Reason Dominique Clayton
 Breonna Taylor Ahmaud Arbery George Floyd

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zichronam livrachah

May their memories be for a blessing.

Meeting the needs of now

From our rabbi



Dear JCOGS family,

We could all use a little hope these days. Hope that we will make it through this pandemic alive. Hope that our economy will bounce back. Hope that social justice and kindness will prevail and become rampant. Hope that we just might see each other again soon face-to-face.

These are trying times. A simple visit to the grocery store becomes a scary chore. Strategies for resilience are in high demand. First, though, we all need time to grieve all that has been lost, and opportunity to question life's meaning. And to express. As Leonard Cohen said: "It's time that we began to laugh, and cry and cry and laugh about it all again."

Last year at JCOGS, we launched Homegrown Judaism, seeking to transform how we co-create community. Early in 2020, some of our members had the opportunity to gather for several "Kibitz Conversations" in the homes of other members. We laughed, even teared up at times, and shared personal stories and our connections to JCOGS and Jewish life. The intent was to meet again and again in-person

over the spring and summer, further engaging each other in these meaningful discussions. Well, you know what happened to those plans.

Yet as with so many other programs, we have pivoted and adapted, while keeping to the core idea (and genuine human need) that our members wish to connect with each other. For a long time, I have wanted to showcase the stories of our founding and long-standing members to the next generations of JCOGS. This summer, we curate The Resilience Project—a multi-generational video interview oral history. You are invited to show up for a live interview on Friday nights before services as our JCOGS teens interview elders. This is Homegrown Judaism 2.0. Youth and parents will interact with the "bubbies" and "zaidies" of our congregation. We will seek answers from our founding members about the trials and tribulations they have faced throughout their lives, asking them:

- What helped you get through the experience?
- What resources did you draw on?
- How has Judaism and community been a source of strength for you?
- When did you know you were going to be okay?

I want our congregation to unearth the wisdom of our sages, showing them the kavod, the honour and respect they so deserve, while they offer us their personal wisdom. We need to lean into the hope that grows out of our past experience—remembering that we have been through grave challenges before and that we will make it through this one, too. This project will take us out of our collective isolation and into continued relationship with one another.

And then there is the hope brought by the next generation. We will capture these interviews as a living catalogue for our JCOGS future. As our JCOGS strategic plan says: "We are proud of what we have built, and we are crafting a future for the next generation of Jewish people in central and northern Vermont." My sincere hope is that this project will empower those who walk in our footsteps to give back to the community, just as our founders did for us.

I am quite certain that these moments we will share across the community will make us laugh and cry and cry and laugh about it all.

Rav brachot, many blessings for hope in trying times,

Rabbi David

Our strategic plan

From our president



Dear JCOGS friends,

A year ago, JCOGS went through a strategic planning process, through which we identified five pillars of focus for our community: robust *tikkun olam*, *l'dor*

vador education, engaged membership, strong Jewish presence in the area, and financial sustainability. Then, this March, the world turned upside down as we closed our physical operations due to Covid-19. Our first reaction was to look at immediate and short term needs. Within days, we pivoted to online religious school, services, and havdalah, and Rabbi David added online meditation. Our chesed committee called each of our members, and continues to follow up with members in need of connection.

L'dor vador education. Engaged membership.

Also, we ordered matzah. Recognizing that our congregation might not be thinking about Pesach yet, we were concerned that Passover supplies would be late coming or that people wouldn't want to go to the store. A month later, when people began to look for matzah and

yahrzeit candles, we set the supplies outside and asked folks to take what they needed.

Strong Jewish presence.

Before the first week was over, we were asking how we could help the larger community. Capstone Community Action told us they were partnering with the schools to provide phones with hotspots so students without internet could log onto school. JCOGS members stepped up and gave generously to help purchase those phones. When one member asked Rabbi David for help figuring out access to PPE, he began work with another member. Ultimately, we purchased a large amount of PPE through the United Way for front line workers and for distribution to the community. When we learned that the Red Cross was desperate for blood drives, we scheduled one of those, too. Necessarily slower and more thoughtful is the work Rabbi David and our *tikkun olam* committee are doing to build a discussion about a Jewish response to racism and racial violence.

Robust tikkun olam.

Within a few weeks, our finance committee had pivoted from budgeting for the coming year

to budgeting for the first quarter, recognizing that we could not predict our donations for next year. Our staff worked to identify areas for cost saving with our building closed. A group of volunteers pivoted and found a way to move our summer fundraiser onto Zoom.

Financial sustainability.

As this Bulletin goes to press, restrictions have loosened somewhat, but there is no telling what the next months or year will bring. We don't know when and how we will meet, what school will look like, or whether our donors will be as generous. Therefore, I want to share with you our five pillars of focus during the time of Covid-19: robust *tikkun olam*, *l'dor vador* education, engaged membership, strong Jewish presence in the area, and financial sustainability.

The world has turned upside down. Nothing is as it was. And yet, our Jewish values and our priorities as a community remain as strong as ever.

All my best,
Emily

L'dor vaDor Society



L'dor vaDor. From generation to generation. Ensuring the continuation of our faith and our traditions has been central to Judaism for millennia. JCOGS has begun a 25th anniversary campaign to honor the generation who built our community by building an endowment to sustain JCOGS for generations to come. A foundational component of that endowment will be the ***L'dor vaDor Society***.

The *L'dor vaDor Society* recognizes those who plan to continue their support for JCOGS in their estates. There is no better way to ensure the longevity of Jewish presence in north-central Vermont than with a legacy gift to JCOGS. Please consider taking these steps:

- Speak to your attorney or financial planner about how to formally include JCOGS in your estate plan.
- Let your family know that you have decided to continue your support of your Jewish community with a legacy gift in your will.
- Reach out to us so we can talk through your plans. If you have already recognized JCOGS in your estate plans, please let us know so that we can thank you for that decision.

Now is our time to continue the legacy of our forebears and ensure a Jewish way of life for generations to come. We hope you will consider becoming part of this very special project.



The beginning of a conversation

Amy Wenger, co-chair tikkun olam committee

The horrific death of George Floyd shook the earth. It was terrifying watching another Black man killed by a police officer pleading for his life, politely and powerlessly. When he called for his mama as he was being killed, it felt visceral.

My two sons wanted to know why their father and I were upset. I let them watch the video, even though I usually shield them from violent images. I watched the video through their eyes. My nine-year-old mirrored my grief, and my 13-year-old echoed my anger.

I found myself unable to answer their questions about George Floyd's death without becoming very emotional. It was uncomfortable, and I realized how much I did not understand. I was not ready to lead them as a parent in this, yet.

In the past few weeks, I have had some very frank conversations with my neighbors and members of my community about white privilege and Black lives. I have learned a lot about where other people stand on the issues. The divide is very clear, and very political. As a Jewish woman, I am triggered by my own generational trauma and the similarities to antisemitism. I do not know how my feelings of empathy should fit in the conversation. I don't always feel privileged. I teach acceptance and inclusion as a parent and as a leader. I love people and in my job as a Registered Nurse put a lot of intention into culturally competent care. I do not identify as a racist.

So, how can I have white privilege?

It was my oldest son who brought me the most clarity:

He said: "Mom, we are racist; that does not mean that we are bad, mean, or terrible; it just means we need to do better to make sure we are treating those with different color skin in a way that won't hurt them. It is not our fault that we were born with skin that allows us to feel safe in our country or into a system that allows us more opportunities. It just means we need to make it equal. Just because you think that you are not hurting Black people, does not mean that they aren't just staying quiet and not telling you because they have been trained over centuries to be that way."

Insert teenage eye roll and back to playing on his device...

My white privilege and racism is not *about* me. It *IS* me. I am comfortable in the systems that have allowed me to not realize my unconscious bias and not understand the propagation of racism that I have continued.

My white privilege and racism is not about me. It IS me. I am comfortable in the systems that have allowed me to not realize my unconscious bias and not understand the propagation of racism that I have continued.

In my field of maternal-child nursing, trauma informed practice is at the forefront of care. When an individual discloses their trauma, would I tell them how to get over it? Would I tell them that it was not real? Would I tell them my story and how I was resilient?

No. I would listen and hold space for them. This is no different.

If someone tells me that their trauma is real, and they are being harmed, it does not matter what my opinion or history is. My role is to acknowledge, listen, and understand that when someone discloses trauma it means they still get to be in charge of it.

I need to acknowledge myself as the color of my skin and my own biases. I need to learn how to own it, how to be okay with being called out.

It will be uncomfortable.

I do not want to shut down or be reactive and defensive anymore.

In my field of nursing, Black women are 2.5 times more likely to die in the childbearing year than white women. This will only get worse if we do not do something different. Black voices must be heard.

I know that my children will not be the target or the victim of violent police encounters due to the color of their skin. My privilege has allowed me to believe that by teaching my children inclusivity, I was leveling the racial playing field. Instead, I was creating silent children who were being trained to say they are color blind to the differences, strengths, struggles, and fear of their Black and brown friends. If we cannot teach them to work for genuine relationships, then the silence will continue to perpetuate.

To repair the world (*tikkun olam*) is at the core of my heart and our JCOGS community. Our tikkun olam committee is using our Jewish values and traditions as a lens for starting to unravel the threads of privilege, racism, and bias and how that can be the empathetic basis for change. We are in the planning stages for community book reads, racial justice in action, and opportunities to listen and share. We can amplify Black people's voices to help begin reparative work in our community. I look forward to going on that journey with you all.

I have a lot to learn. We have a lot to learn. But this much I know:

Black lives more than matter.

Black lives are valued. Black lives are worthy. Black lives are important and loved.

A kitten, a chick, and a puppy walk into a Zoom class

Jewish learning during a pandemic

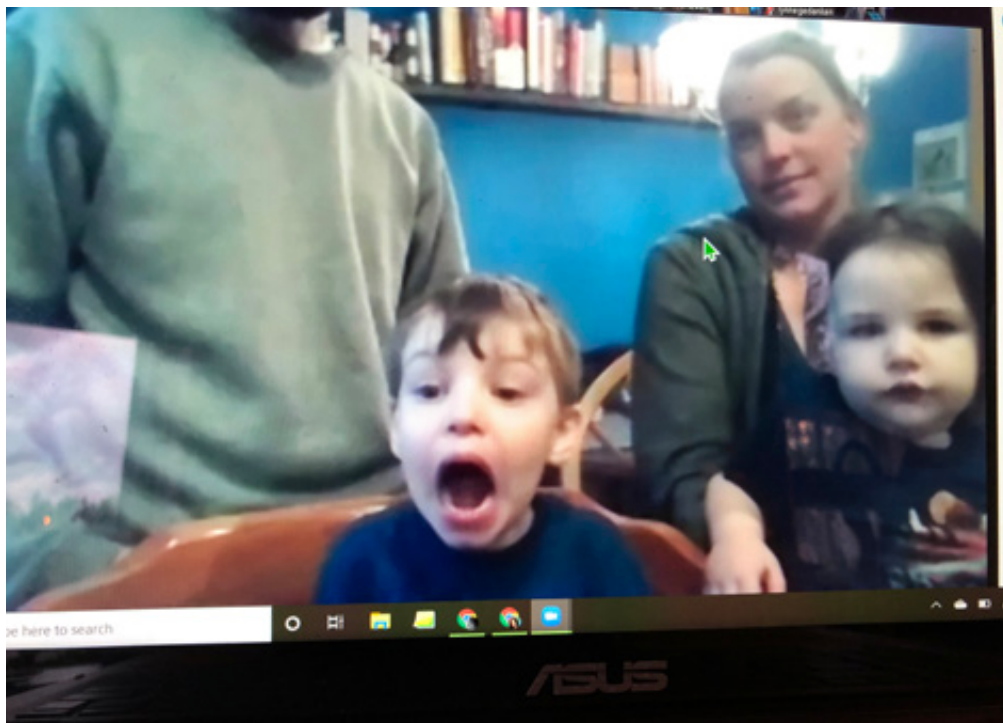
Beth Liberman, Director of Family and Youth Education

The question hangs in the air. Literally. *Mah chadash?* hand-written on paper waving in front of the computer screen. "What's new?!" several voices chime in, tripping over one another in typical Zoom fashion as they shout out their recognition of the Hebrew. The enthusiasm is palpable. Siblings jostle one another on the couch like puppies and furry tails meander across the screen as pets wander in and out. Olam Chesed has gone virtual.

Yet as *chadash/new* as the first quarantine meeting was, it was abundantly *familiar*. In all the strange newness of a world turned inside out, our Wednesday afternoon program was familiar. Family. As schools scrambled to pivot to online learning, Olam Chesed was already there. Separated from their everyday social circles, our kids cherished their weekly connection with one another, with Rabbi David, with the comfort of the *Shema*, and with our stellar teachers.

Mitzvah students never missed a beat, though they desperately missed Amy's mac 'n cheese balls and chocolate fondue. Gathering for their first online class, they dove deeply into studying about the rabbis and sages—whose commentary they would draw upon for their *divrei Torah* (sermons)—and stayed online for nearly two hours. Kinderlach families woke up to a brave new world onscreen and learned to prepare matzah brei with Rabbi David and how to say *boker tov*/good morning with Tzipi the curious bird puppet.

In Mishna 15 Shammai says: *Make your Torah (study time) fixed; say little and do much; and greet every person with a pleasant expression.* All of our Olam Chesed programs remained a constant in the rhythm of our families' lives. On Wednesdays we continued to sing and learn with Rabbi David and then shuffled off to *har, midbar, and ya'ar*—our breakout Zoom "classrooms" named for our JCOGS



Daniel's first Jumbotron on a Zoom Shabbat.



Bubbies and Zaidies joined their kinderlach/little children for a Shabbat morning tea party with Rabbi David and Shabbasaurus.

rooms: "mountain", "desert", and "forest"—for Hebrew learning and Jewish studies. We *shmoozed* and shared new pets (on one sunny day in May, every child who signed

on was holding either a kitten, a puppy, or a chick), and despite the distance and the coldness of technology that separated us, we jumped and danced and even



JCOGS members Judy and Larry Dunn invited some fuzzy stand-in grandchildren to their quarantine Seder.



Rabbi David discovered that the afikoman had broken into a perfect Vermont-shaped piece at the (virtual) JCOGS community seder.

gathered virtually around a campfire. We were persistent in perpetuating the active essence of our Olam Chesed gatherings. We have been consistent in cultivating relevant experiences of Jewish culture, ritual, and tradition.

And that continues to be our mission going forward, no matter what COVID-19 has in store for us. We will gather. We will pray. We will sing, and dance, and explore, and learn. We will create, we will question, we will challenge, we will do. Our theme this

coming year is *mitzvah* and we will dive deeply into how we can apply the concept of *mitzvah* to a world that is hurting. Each child will come to recognize the ways in which we can build *Olam Chesed*/a world of lovingkindness through the ancient *mitzvot*.

Rabbi Meir said: When the Israelites came to receive the Torah, God said to them, "Bring me good sureties that you will observe it." They answered, "Our ancestors shall be our sureties." God replied, "Your



A zoom flashmob of blessings_*brachah*

sureties need sureties themselves. I have found fault with them." They answered, "Our prophets shall be our sureties." God replied, "I have found fault with them also." Then the Israelites said, "Our children will be our sureties." They proved acceptable, and God gave Israel the Torah. (Shir HaShirim Rabbah, 1:4)

Ateed, now burgeoning to three cohorts of post-mitzvah teens, will engage actively in connecting to one another (virtually and in person), to other teens throughout the region, and to the JCOGS community through a video oral history project that will record this moment in human history. Our youth's questions guiding our elders' memories will be our surety that the wisdom of this historic era will be preserved for the future through the lens of our precious Jewish community of the greater Stowe area.

There is a lot of uncertainty now but the thing that I am sure of is the blessing of the children: showing up, asking questions, smiling brightly, and paving the way for the future.

B'rachah/with blessing.

A HUGE thank you to Olivia, Elisabeth, Beth, Amy, Debra Ann, Jonah, Ayelet, and Rabbi David for their commitment and hard work.



These are tenuous times we are living in. Now more than ever, we feel the impact and importance of connected community and our relationship with the broader community. We have decided to give a financial contribution to JCOGS that far exceeds what we have donated to any one organization before. It is a gift for the future of the JCOGS community. We invite those who are able at this time to join us in supporting our community.

Rabbi David & Alison

Chesed in the time of coronavirus

Cyndy Wyatt, chair chesed committee

Chesed is well positioned to respond to the needs of the community

The mission of the chesed committee is to "reach out to one another at difficult times through acts of caring and lovingkindness." In typical times, acts of kindness include comforting the bereaved through phone calls and letters and preparing and delivering meals to the sick. Throughout the Covid-19



Beth Liberman, director of family and youth education, delivering falafel-assembling kits to families in celebration of Yom HaAtzmaut/Israeli Independence Day



Lev, Sarah, and Winnie, receiving their Israeli street food kit.

pandemic, chesed continues to do this work, but we are called to do much more. During the month of April, eight dedicated members of our JCOGS community made phone calls to every JCOGS household. The volunteers shared information about how to connect to JCOGS programming through Zoom and lent a friendly ear to individuals isolating alone. Folks who required special assistance with groceries or who needed follow up phone calls were referred to the chesed committee chair, Cyndy Wyatt (cyndy.wyatt@jcogs.org).

Chesed is a core Jewish value and appears in the Torah more than 130 times. Covid-19 presents a challenge and an opportunity to affirm the value of chesed. Fortunately, our work occurs out in the community and it continues however long the doors of JCOGS must remain closed. Committee members continue to meet bi-monthly over Zoom and we continue to serve and nurture our Jewish community.



First annual JCOGS Shoe biShvat.

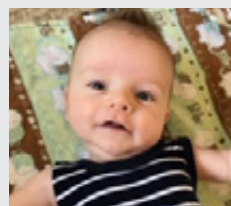


Tree hugging during Shoe biShvat.

Simchas in Our Community



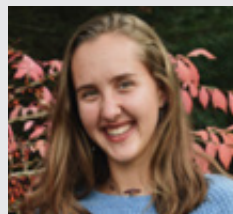
Jennifer & Hart Rotblatt on the birth of their son, Koren Rotblatt, on May 13, 2020.



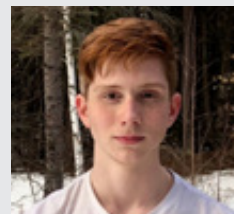
Katie & Matt Yoskowitz on the birth of their son, Samson Harris, on March 25, 2020.



Bella Skye Braverman graduated from Stowe High School and will be attending the University of Denver in the fall.



Ayla Oshkello graduated from Harwood Union High School and will be attending Skidmore College in the fall.



Ethan Thomas Stewart graduated from Stowe High School and will be taking a gap year in the fall.

Sad News Announcements

David R Gottlieb z"l, father and father-in-law of Adam and Lori Gottlieb, and grandfather of Jonathan and Kelsey Ruth, passed away on Tuesday, February 4 (9 Sh'vat).

Elaine Gedanken z"l, mother of Lynne Gedanken, grandmother of Max Levine with Kate Smith, and great-grandmother of Jack and Tess, passed away on Sunday, April 19 (25 Nisan).

Howard Alter z"l, husband of Bianca Toffolo, passed on Wednesday, April 29 (5 Iyyar).

Robert Harvey Temkin z"l, father of Aron Temkin, passed on Friday, May 1 (8 Iyyar).

Ronald Grossman z"l, father and father-in-law of Nancy and Allan Salzman, passed away on Friday, May 29 (6 Sivan).

Myron H. Kornitsky z"l, father of Alice Goins and grandfather of Eyanna and Jacob, passed away on Thursday, June 18 (26 Sivan).

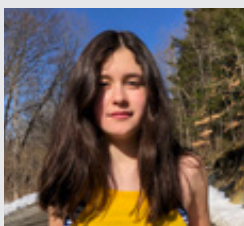
Stan Needleman z"l, husband of Judith Needleman, passed away on Sunday, June 21 (29 Sivan).

May their memories forever be a blessing.

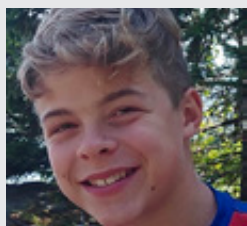


Purim smiles.

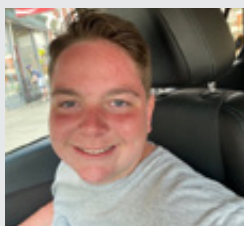
Mitzvah celebrations!



Ruby Morehead, August 8



Asa Rosenberg, August 15



Marley Begins, October 24

